Richard Bull to Thomas Pennant

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To:	Thomas Pennant
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Dear Sir.

North Court. Isle of Wight. July 15.. 1794.

In hopes of getting a frank, a very simple excuse I must confess, I have neglected to answer a very kind letter of yours, receiv'd almost a month ago; but in truth I had no comfort to offer a Parent under such a heavy visitation as the loss of a child. it alters the course of nature, and I shudder at the very Idea, the more so perhaps ^because it was so near being my own case not a year ago, but it is incumbent upon as all, to remember the blessings we receive from the hand of God, as well as the Afflictions. A better comforter than I am, has told us, that submission is the only way of reasoning, between a Creature, and its maker, and that contentment in his will, is the greatest duty we can pretend to, and the best remedy we can apply to all our misfortunes. We are just now lamenting a simalar stroke which has most heavily fallen, upon a very valuable friend of ours, Lady Clarges, whose Son, as promissing, and as amiable a Boy as ever was born, receiv'd his deaths wound on board the Marlbro^, where the cool intrepidity of his behavior, had drawn upon him, the attention and applause of Captain Berkeley, and all the Crew. after the action, He wrote to his mother, that He was never so frighten'd in all his life, for he had seen above twenty men killed in half an hour, but had come off luckily himself, with only a knock upon the pate; a dreadfull knock it turn'd out, for not long after his wretched mother, who travell'd from Richmond to Plymouth, without quitting her chaise, arriv'd there, it was found necessary to trepan him, when a piece of shaggy iron, and several smaller bits of cruel, and unwarrantable instruments of death, being extracted from the skull,, the poor little fellow died in her arms, and She is return'd as miserable as you, and M^{rs} Pennant know too well, a fond Parent is capable of being made.

These savage Butchers of france, in what a manner they make war! the Prisoners in the Captur'd Ships at Portsmouth acknowledge that they had tin Canisters on board, fill'd with rusty nails, bits of knives, pieces of broken-glass, and what not, which they fired upon our brave and generous Countrymen, to the disgrace of humanity. Many of the Crew of the Sans Pareil,[1] (which by the bye, is the finest Specimen of Naval Architecture ever beheld) say they were forc'd on board, never having been at sea before, and were kept at the Guns, by officers with pistols at their heads, and they add that a report was circulated throughout the fleet, that the English Admiral had given it out, in the order of the day, that every french-man was to be put to death as soon as taken, so they thought it was better to sink, than Strike. –

A friend of mine sent me an extract from the Journal of the Flora Frigate, – after her return from her last channel cruise, where She had captur'd some fishing vessels, the master of one of which, belong'd to Brest, and was there when the Fleet return'd, after one of the proudest days, and the most fortunate, in all its probable consequences, that England has ever seen.[2] He reports that Commissioners had arrived at Brest, who had condemn'd several of the officers to the Guillotine, as fast as they landed, and that He saw twenty six heads struck off, in Eleven minutes, which is more than two in a minute. ^may so perish the whole Convention, and its adherents; would to God they had but one head, and that I was order'd to cut it off! – There has been an Idea at Brighthelmston, that a Party of Smuglers had engag'd to carry off the Prince of Wales, and as many of the officers, as they could lay their hands on, and to

land them in France. I can’t tell you whether this report has any foundation in truth, but Col: Minchin, who is on duty there, informs me, that the Duke of Richmond has order’d an additional Guard in the camp, and placed Sentinels all over the town. possibly this scheme might not be so impracticable by a desperate set of Ruffians, as it seems at first sight, but at all events, his Royal highness should pass his insignificant time some where else. Sir Henry Clinton is appointed Governor of Gibraltar, but every good has its attendant evil; His son, who is aide de Camp to the Duke of York, was wounded by a cannon Ball at the beginning of the Campaign, and bad consequences are apprehended. Our Relation –, young Bennett, after having his thigh Broken last year, was made Captain ~~Captain~~ of a Sloop of war, in reward for his gallant behavior, ^# has since been taken, and is now a Prisoner at Valence, with a Stiff knee, for which he wishes to use the Baths of Aix, but the Barbarians refuse him that poor comfort. in short who is there this year that has not a child, or some Relative to lament. I feel much oblig’d to you for what you say respecting your secretary being put upon my work at some convenient time, and I beg it may not be till you can spare him from your own Business. *that M.S.* will afford me as much pleasure as I am now able to enjoy, but I am so dead to pleasure that I find few things worth the anxiety of a wish. – all I have now to hope, is to live without pain, and to die without fear, but should your intended favor reach my hands before I am gone hence, and no more seen, I shall bequeath it to those, who will know how to value it, as highly as I shall myself. If I had the pleasure of seeing you here,, (and a very great pleasure, I do assure you, I should think it) you would suppose nothing was so little in my contemplation, as Dying, for we are pulling down, and building up, at an extravagant rate indeed, but our workmen are the poor, the maim’d, & the halt, and I would willingly include the blind, if there were any in the parish; in short I pass my time in very busy Idleness, and my daughters[3] assist, and ~~encorage~~ encourage me; thank God they are both well, and both desire to join with me, in their best remembrances, & all manner of good wishes, to you and all of the House of Pennant.

I am Dear Sir, very truly, & faithfully yours

Rich[d]: Bull

Stamp: (postmark) O. JY. 16 94; By London.[4]

Stamp: (handstamp) N ISLE OF WIGHT

Thomas Pennant Esq[re]: | Downing | Flintshire

Editorial Notes

[1] An 80-gun third rate ship of the line, captured from the French during the naval battle of 1 June 1794, and commissioned thereafter into the Royal Navy.

[2] Bull continues to refer to the 'Glorious First of June', 1794.

[3] Elizabeth and Catherine Bull.

[4] The instruction 'By London' is handwritten.